

Tell Me What It's Like to Be Big



JOYCE DUNBAR • DEBI GLIORI

*Tell Me What It's
Like to Be Big*





For Tim and Kelly
in the world by themselves
— J.G.

For Michael, with lots of love
— D.G.

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ISBN 0-438-42343-8

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12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

2345678

Printed in the U.S.A.

24

First Scholastic printing, September 2003

U.S. edition designed by Barry Agat

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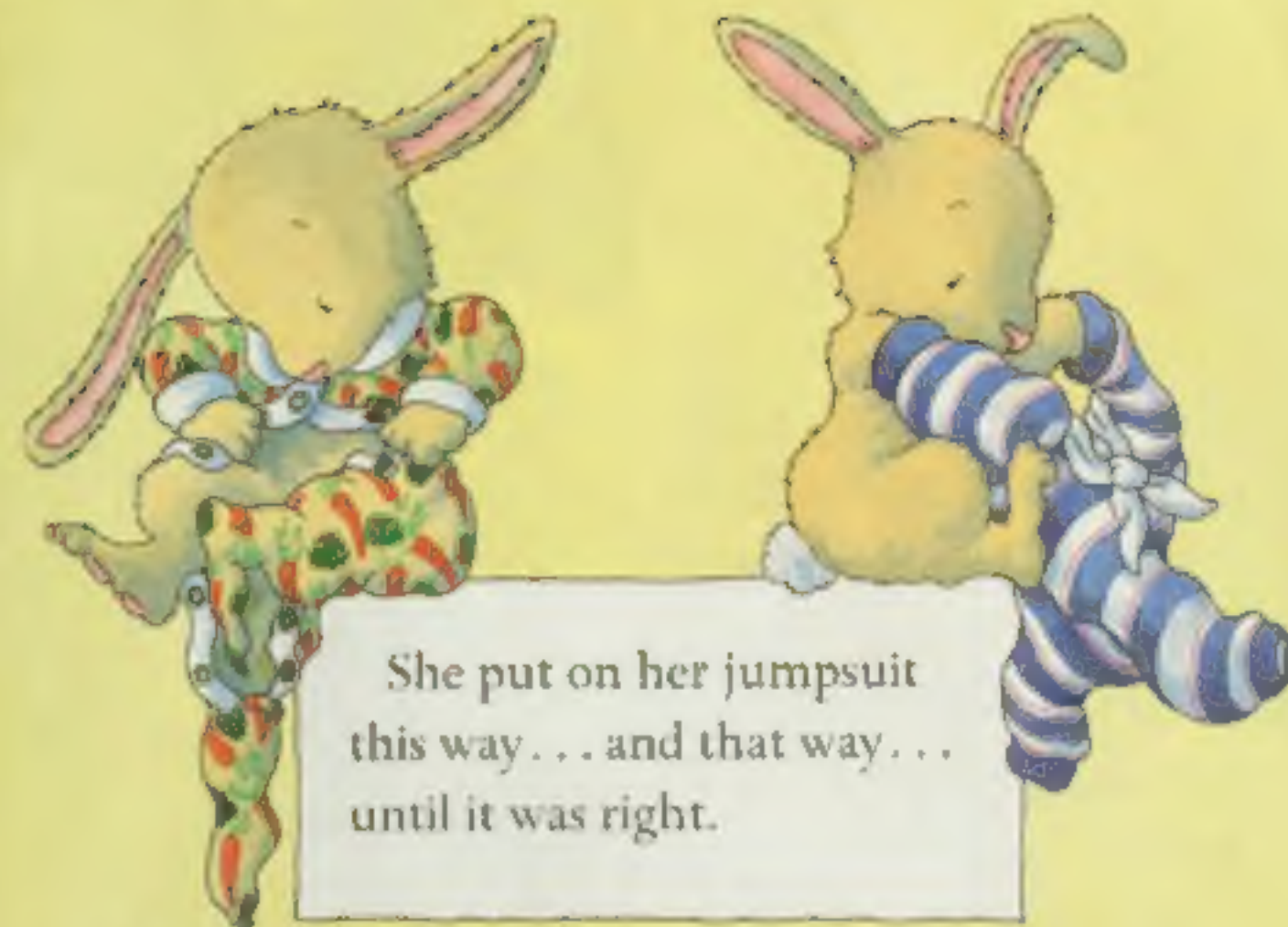
SCHOLASTIC, INC.

New York London Toronto Sydney
Mexico City Hong Kong Beijing
Singapore





*M*orning peeped through the window. Willa was first to wake up.



She put on her jumpsuit
this way . . . and that way . . .
until it was right.



Then Willa put on her chicken slippers and went downstairs to have breakfast.

No one else was around. She tried to reach the bread and honey and the oats and the milk and the apples.

She tried this way . . . and that way . . . but Willa couldn't reach.



Back she went upstairs.

"Willoughby," she called, "are you awake?"

"I am now," said Willoughby.

"I'm hungry," said Willa.

"Then go and get something to eat."

"I can't reach," said Willa. "Will you come and reach for me?"

Willoughby sighed. "Okay. Pass me my slippers."





Paw in paw, Willoughby and Willa went downstairs.

"You can reach because you are big," said Willa.

"That's right," said Willoughby, "and one day you'll be big, too."

"Will I?" asked Willa.

Then they both settled down to eat breakfast.

"How big will I be?" asked Willa.

"Oh, very big," said Willoughby.

"Will I be bigger than you?" asked Willa.

"No," said Willoughby.


"Why?" asked Willa.

"Because I got started first," said Willoughby. "And I'll go on getting bigger, too."

"That means you can wash the dishes," said Willa.

"Sort of," said Willoughby.





"Tell me what it's like to be big," said Willa.

"Well, you can do lots of things," said Willoughby.

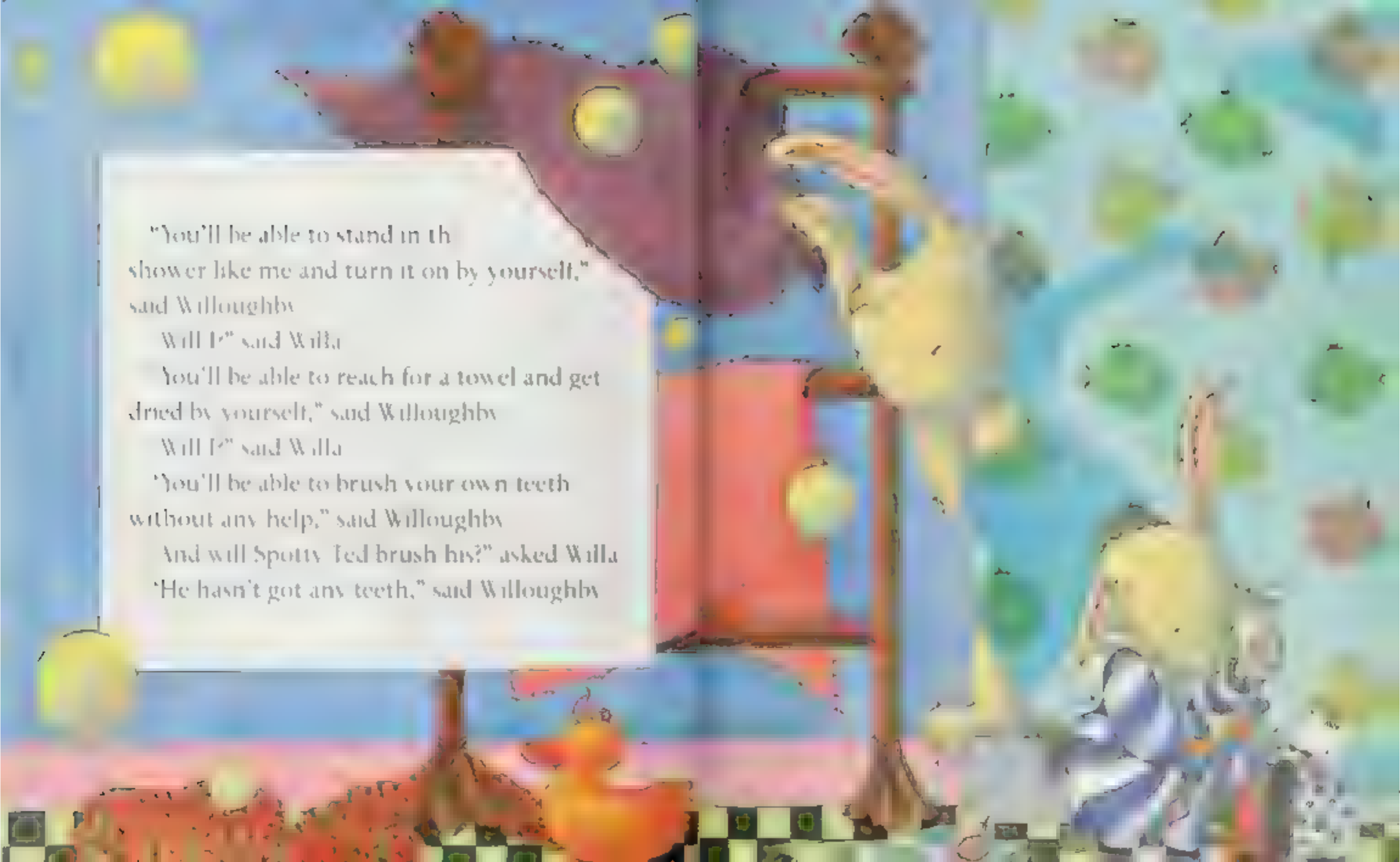
"What things?" asked Willa.

"You'll be able to reach the lamp by yourself when you're big," said Willoughby.

"Will I?" asked Willa.

"Oh yes," said Willoughby. "And when you're really big, nearly as big as I'll be, you might be able to reach the moon in a rocket!"

"What else will I do when I'm big?" asked Willa.



"You'll be able to stand in the shower like me and turn it on by yourself," said Willoughby.

"Will I?" said Willa.

"You'll be able to reach for a towel and get dried by yourself," said Willoughby.

"Will I?" said Willa.

"You'll be able to brush your own teeth without any help," said Willoughby.

"And will Spotty Ted brush his?" asked Willa.

"He hasn't got any teeth," said Willoughby.

"So will I have to make my own bed?" asked Willa. "Will I have to tidy my own toys?"

"You won't have any toys," said Willoughby. "You'll be too big for toys."

"Willoughby," said Willa.

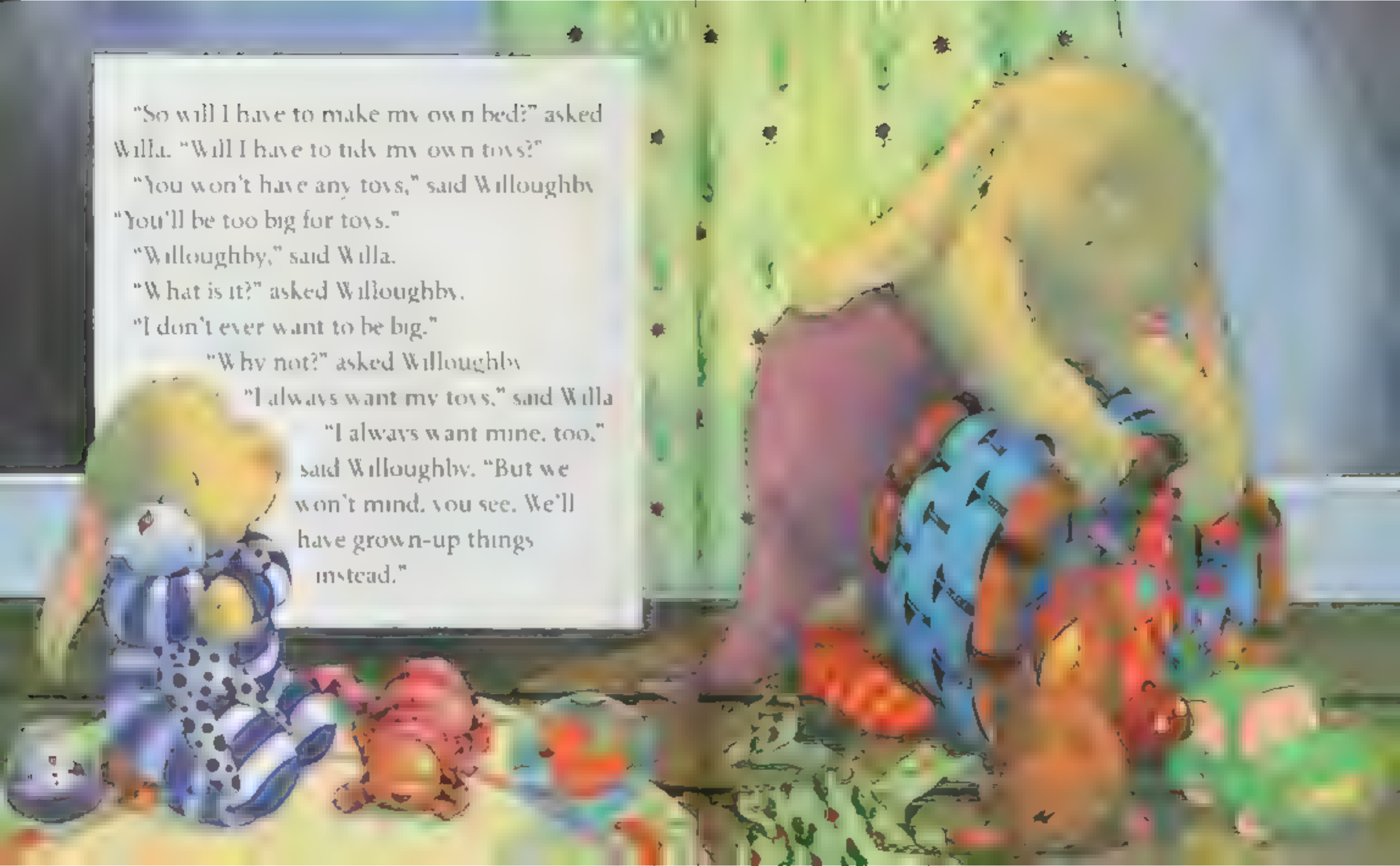
"What is it?" asked Willoughby.


"I don't ever want to be big."

"Why not?" asked Willoughby.

"I always want my toys," said Willa.

"I always want mine, too," said Willoughby. "But we won't mind, you see. We'll have grown-up things instead."





—

"But then I might have to *do* grown up things," said Willa.

"Like what?" asked Willoughby.

"Like go out the door all by myself . . . like walk down the road all by myself . . . like be in the world all by myself. There might be nobody there!"

"Spotty Ted will be there," said Willoughby. "You can keep him forever, if you like."

—

"But I might not fit into my chicken slippers anymore," said Willa

"Then you could have some rooster slippers like mine, or some pom pom slippers like Mom's," said Willoughby. "I know. Let's go and see if Mom's awake."

She wasn't, but they climbed in beside her anyway.

"This is very early morning." She yawned, looking at the clock. "Why don't we just snuggle up for a while?"





"Mom," said Willa, "were you ever small?"

"I was," said Mom. "Smaller even than you."

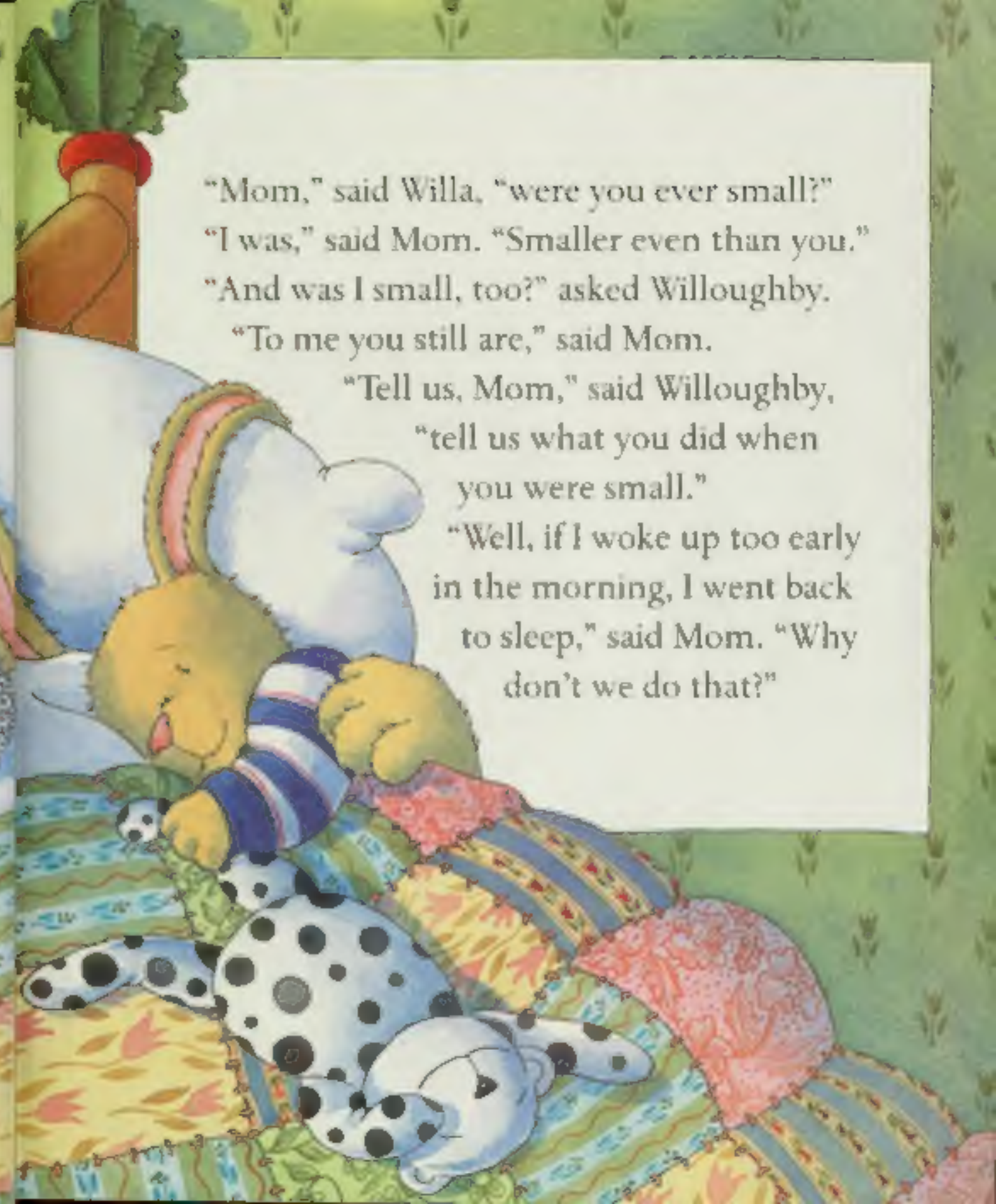
"And was I small, too?" asked Willoughby.

"To me you still are," said Mom.

"Tell us, Mom," said Willoughby,

"tell us what you did when
you were small."

"Well, if I woke up too early
in the morning, I went back
to sleep," said Mom. "Why
don't we do that?"





And they did.



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